

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 03701 091408Z

53

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8750

INFO USMISSION BERLIN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRETORIA 3701

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS SF

SUBJ: BANNED STUDENT LEADERS FLEE OVERSEAS

REF: DURBAN 303 (NOTAL) AND 323 (NOTAL); PRETORIA 3152 (NOTAL)

1. PRESS HAS REPORTED THAT SEVERAL LEADERS OF MILITANT BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS ORGANIZATION (SASO) HAVE FLED OVERSEAS TO ESCAPE GOVERNMENT BANNING ORDERS AND HARASSMENT.

2. IN WAKE OF ALL-OUT GOVERNMENT EFFORT TO SUPPRESS BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA, PUNCTUATED BY SERIES OF BANNINGS AND OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT OF SASO AND BLACK PEOPLE'S CONVENTION (BPC) OFFICIALS, SEVERAL SASO LEADERS ARE REPORTED TO HAVE FLED COUNTRY VIA SECRET ROUTE. NAMES OF ABRAHAM TIRO, SASO PERMANENT ORGANIZER, HARRY NENGWEKHULU, PERMANENT ORGANIZER (BANNED) AND BOKWE MAFUNA, FIELD RESEARCHER FOR SASO-RELATED PROGRAMS (BANNED), WERE GIVEN BY PRESS. THREE OTHER LOWER-RANKING SASO MEMBERS ARE ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE FLED COUNTRY.

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PAGE 02 PRETOR 03701 091408Z

3. DESTINATION OF TIRO AND OTHERS IS BELIEVED TO BE BERLIN AND PRESS SPECULATES THAT THEY MAY HAVE RECEIVED AID FROM GERMAN SYMPATHIZERS. (WHEN ASKED, REPORTER COULD OR WOULD NOT SAY WHETHER HE WAS REFERRING TO EAST OR WEST BERLIN). PRESS IS ALSO LINKING SASO MILITANTS' FLIGHT WITH "DISAPPEARANCE" OF JOYCE SIKAKANE IN JULY 1973. SIKAKANE, A JOURNALIST AND FIREND OF WINNIE MANDELA, WIFE OF JAILED AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS LEADER, NELSON MANDELA, WAS RESTRICTED TO HER PARENTS' JOHANNESBURG HOME. NOTHING HAS BEEN HEARD OF HER SINCE JULY.

4. MEANWHILE, DURBAN SECURITY BRANCE POLICEMEN (THREE CARLOADS OF THEM) HAVE SERVED BANNING ORDER ON BEN LANGA, SASO PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR AND SECRETARY GENERAL AND ONE OF LAST TOP SASO OFFICIALS NOT RESTRICTED IN SOME WAY. LANGA HAD DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT LAST WEEK AND THERE WAS SOME SPECULATION THAT HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN AMONG THOSE WHO FLED COUNTRY. NO EXPLANATION FOR HIS ABSENCE WAS GIVEN TO PRESS. RELATIVELY MILD BANNING ORDER -- SERVED OCTOBER 8 -- FORBIDS LANGA TO "ATTEND ANY GATHERING, INCLUDING GATHERINGS OF PUPILS OR STUDENTS ASSEMBLED FOR BEING INSTRUCTED, TRAINED OR ADDRESSED BY HIM, SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND POLITICAL GATHERING AT WHICH ANY FORM OF STATE IS PROPAGATED, DEFENDED, ATTACKED, CRITICIZED OR DISCUSSED." IN TERMS OF BANNING ORDER, LANGA MAY CONTINUE TO ACT AS SASO SECRETARY GENERAL.

5. COMMENT: FACED WITH YEARS OF STAGNATION AND HARASSMENT, STUDENT LEADERS MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT OPEN AND LEGAL ORGANIZATIONAL METHODS CAN ACHIEVE NOTHING IN PRESENT HARD-LINE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE OF SOUTH AFRICA AND CHOSE EXILE TO CONTINUE ANTI-APARTHEID FIGHT OVERSEAS. IN THIS SENSE, FLIGHT OF SASO LEADERS, IF CONFIRMED, TESTIFIES TO EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT MEASURES AGAINST BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT. IN ANOTHER SENSE, HOWEVER, IT MAY PROVE BE PYRRHIC VICTORY BY DRIVING MILITANT OPPONENTS OF APARTHEID UNDERGROUND AND INTO MORE VIOLENT MEANS OF SEEKING CHANGE.

SMITH

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